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## Ambiguities of Citizenship. Reframing the Notion of Citizenship Education

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### Abstract

Complex transformations world-wide encompassed by the definition of ‘globalisation’ push us to re-think the concept of citizenship and its traditional definitions. The article aims to theoretically analyse the rich debate about citizenship from a socio-political point of view and tries to investigate the educational dimension related to different concepts of citizenship. After having introduced three models for citizenship education (republican, liberal, and moral) and having explored their shortcomings, the authors shall propose a possible overtaking that is rooted on another way to understand the relationship among education and politics.

**Keywords:** citizenship education, multiplex citizenship, multiculturalism, political acting, political education

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### Introduction

In 2005, the riots of Paris’ *banlieues* triggered the debate about the future of migrant youth citizens in Europe. Particularly, in Italy, even as the promise of a

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missed equality was burning in the garbage bin of Paris, the question was: what would happen next? (Zincone 2006)

Rapidly, proposals for reforming citizenship rules to include those born in Italy into the political arena and for giving the right to vote to migrants in administrative elections was forgotten. Is moreover well established that citizenship often emerges to the social agenda as problematic emergency and not from as a continuous and improvable political debate.

From the 1970s, international migrations have increasingly been of significance in Italy and, one should say, structurally also. The presence of migrants' sons and daughters concurs above all both to stabilize the migrant presence and to make discussions about citizenship complex. According to some interpretations, second generation migrants would represent a 'social bomb' about to explode (Barbagli 2002) because it would refer to a lack of inclusion, similar to what happened in France. However, talking about the concept of immigrants as a 'social bomb' would correspond to a public discourse on fear, fear of those who feel insecure and economically challenged by the presence of migrants. In fact, if second generation migrants are a 'social bomb', the threat does not arise from second generation itself but on the actual possibility of social inclusion and social justice the receiving countries can offer them. In other terms, it depends on the way citizenship is talked about by the host country and also on the manner education is imparted.

But what is the place for education within the citizenship debate?

In the first part of this article, several definitions of the idea of citizenship are outlined, searching for one more suitable in terms of citizenship education. Secondly, the aim is to explore three models of citizenship education, which are unqualified for educating people for multiplex citizenship, and to identify the only one that should be put into practice. Finally, to make it the pivotal area for political action, a meaningful change in the sense of education itself is suggested.

### **Exploring Definitions of Citizenship**

Citizenship is related to a complex structure of relationships (Kymlicka & Norman 1994). Actually, citizenship is itself a way of talking about the relationship between an individual and the other citizens or the society, the Nation-State, the European Community, and so on.

As the concept of citizenship is regarding relationships, it changes as the types of relationships change. Even if the concept is far from vanishing, this would mean a reformulation of citizenship is needed in the contemporary world, where the status of Nation-State is in crisis, where residence and nationality don't overlap, where granting of rights is not reserved strictly to citizens (Sassen 2002, Cohen 1999, Vitale 2005, Benhabib 2006, Isin, Turner 2002).

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Although recently Will Kymlicka has slightly changed his trust in multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka 2010) he has stressed some of the reasons why the contemporary situation calls for reformulation of citizenship (Kymlicka & Norman 2000): not only the rise of minorities' rights, the burning debate over multiculturalism, and the difficulties for people to participate to political discussions as citizens, but also other dramatic political trends in Western Countries such as increased voter apathy, the erosion of the welfare state and the public sphere (Nussbaum 2007), gender differences (Young 2006), and the failure of environmental policies (Shiva 2005) all need citizens' cooperation to be effective.

The term 'citizenship' is complex and ambiguous, as well being as culturally and historically related.

The socio-political definition of citizenship cannot but start not only from its modern, sociologically oriented, but also the trivial/ordinary, meaning introduced by T.H. Marshall, who defines it as: 'a status bestowed upon those who are full members of a community' (Marshall 1992, 18). This notion of citizenship denotes related rights and, implicitly, it marks the boundary between those who have membership and those who have not. Therefore, it is a status that includes and excludes at the same time, depending on points of views (Figuerola 2000, 50). The responsibility of not having taken into account the obstacles in reaching the fullness of right recalls Marshall's point of view: for example, obstacles related to gender and ethnicity, with the consequence of limiting the definition of a citizen to an individual who is male, adult, and Anglo-Saxon (Held 1989, Torres 1998).

Today this classical notion seems to be in crisis from different perspectives, all of them related to the decline of the Nation-State. Firstly, it is strictly related to a Nation-State, human rights exist only if bestowed by a Nation-State.

Secondly, and curiously, citizenship rights, born as human and global, are today the last defense of nineteenth-century nationalism. The growing phenomena of migration toward Western countries make this citizenship an obsolete defense of the privileges in the Western world.

Thirdly, not delving deeply into this topic, rights of participation are exercised less and less everyday despite their growing entitlement. Power is becoming increasingly far removed from citizens' control. The decline of the Nation-State, by separating politics from power, has also made meaningless the actual possibility of citizens participating in the political decision processes, which is now spread to a far off and indefinite supranational space (Sassen 2002).

In this article, citizenship is illustrated according to four main definitions, as a starting point to answer the question: what is the definition of citizenship that sees education having a key role in political decision making? The four definitions are related to socio-political debate which include changes in the meaning of citizen-

ship because of the presence of migrants as bearers of cultural differences, needing new rights, and new social needs.

The first definition is that of *multicultural citizenship*, which defends minorities as separated groups that live in the same territory; the second one is called ‘*denizenship*’ or semi-citizenship, which defines citizens as those who gain rights by living in a place (*ius soli*); the third one is represented by post-national membership, according to which the status of ‘person’ substitutes that of citizen in acquiring rights; lastly the so-called *multiplex or trans-national citizenship* that expresses issues coming from multiplex identities. What the article aims to sustain, in fact, is a new way of looking at citizenship, a perspective in which education would have right to declare itself as agent of political change. Doing so means assuming a citizenship definition whose starting point is identities of persons and not often distant laws and debates on citizenship: supporting process of reframing citizenship education is bottom-up one.

### *Multicultural Citizenship*

Will Kymlicka stressed the option for multicultural citizenship as it is founded in recognizing the role of differences, in particular for those minorities living in a nation that should provide interventions to improve the needs of the minority groups (Kymlicka 1995).

The main contribution of multiculturalism consists more in challenging the issue of equality than the answers given to this issue (Tarrow 2005, 108). In fact, multiculturalism avoids promoting the idea that the principle of equality would hide the different capacities among groups in accessing resources, as it happened in France where the missed promise of egalitarianism caused social disorders, not of ethnic or religious nature as the media and some analysis pointed out.

One of the limitations of this perspective is the manner of dealing with cultural differences within a country. Minorities would find spaces of expressions only if they are integrated or dispersed in the mainstream of national-cultural identity with the consequences of both losing the implicit potentiality of a pluralistic perspective (Tarrow 2005, 125), and reducing the possibility of each minority to pursue particular needs.

This way of thinking about multiculturalism reveals a problematic implicit: the essence of the identity of others would be something static rather than fluid and changing (Benhabib 2002). Examples of interventions linked to multicultural conception are found in the Canadian legislation and, without completely considering the logical consequences, in the United States where the controversial ‘affirmative actions’ as temporary dispositions was introduced as ‘positive discrimination tools’ (Tarrow, Torres, in press).

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### *Denizenship*

The concept of 'denizenship' was initially introduced by Hammar (1990) indicating an intermediate position in between being migrant and being citizen. According to the principle of residency, even migrants who live in a territory for long are accepted as people who may enjoy rights (Soysal 1994, 138), such as civil rights and part of social rights. Here, the principle of residency has overcome nationality.

'Denizenship' could be intended as a sort of social citizenship with no relation to Nation-State policy, as some rights are granted not for a juridical position but for respecting the common humanity of any individual: those rights represent the 'social minimum' (Zolo 1994) to migrants who live in a territory and enhance local economy. In other words, a denizen, far from being a full citizen, is a sort of an imperfect citizen.

Overlapping citizenship and granting rights is inaccurate: for instance, the housing right is not per se sufficient, to exhaust the complex nature of citizenship. There could be a public space of expression that includes civil and political rights beyond social ones to make denizenship complete.

### *Post-national Membership*

The concept of a denizen has been also used for sustaining the deterioration of citizenship and to propose a post-national definition of it (Soysal 1994, Jacobson 1996).

A very radical reformulation of citizenship concept is that of postnational membership as discussed by Yasmine Soysal (1994) in her *Limits of Citizenship*. Human rights made obsolete the concept of citizenship. What was due to citizens for their national membership now would be due also to individuals for their belonging to humanity, according to universal personhood. Post-national citizenship gives anyone the right and duty of being part of a society, regardless of previous historical or cultural relationships with a particular living place (Soysal 1994, 136-137). According to this view, the deterioration of citizenship starts from the fact that access to rights is no more a prerogative of citizens only, but also of other individuals resident in a country, as it was recognized regarding denizens. In contrast to denizenship, here the inclusive element is being a permanent resident.

Among the factors that brought about this reconfiguration is the presence of supranational structures that are able to influence choices of single countries (Jacobson 1996, 14); in addition, a second factor is represented by the Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Convention (Soysal 2004, Jacobson 1996).

The authors are not convinced by post-national citizenship as it remains strictly linked to the management style of a country, overestimating the taken-for-granted naturalization of migrants. Insisting on the lack of differences between citizens and migrants could be dangerous: on one hand, it cannot be taken for granted that

the migrants will be able or are capable of pursuing their rights, on the other hand, migrants may be exposed to continuously changing rules and laws (it would be enough thinking about the Italian law on Immigration, Bossi-Fini, n. 189, 30/7/2002, that subordinates the right of residency to a job contract).

In addition, even if the entitlement of rights is effective, the status of a citizen and a migrant are not equal: citizenship is not losing sense; rather the citizens' perception of their citizenship is changing. Citizenship is being decreasingly correlated to rights than ethnic and national identity. Bastenier and Dassetto (1990) have questioned the fact that nations are gaining even more power as a reaction to the universalisation of rights. In other words, there is a new typology of nationalism, a sort of welfare nationalism that wants new forms of identity and membership (Bastenier and Dassetto 1990, 25-26).

### *Multiplex Citizenship*

Other authors assuming the premises of Soysal and Jacobson regarding conceding rights processes reach different considerations. Cohen (1999), for instance, has corrected the post-national theory by separating the principle of citizenship from the concept of personhood to try to construct a new synthesis among supranational, local, and regional structures that would support the state and would be of reciprocal limitation (Cohen 1999, Benhabib 2004, Sassen 2002). In fact, denationalization of citizenship does not imply that the state would stop exercising its power or even negotiating with other power institutions.

This perspective takes into account the complexity of relationships that link state to diverse actors (both individuals and institutions), to international and supranational structures. In addition, multiplex citizenship seems to fit what is happening around us: migrations are circular; they rarely are identical to the initial immigration, is seldom linear with a one way movement.

Multiplex citizenship would recognize everyone's identity as it is aware that everyone has the right to combine and live different cultural, social, national characteristics, betraying the membership to a social, cultural or national group seen as monolithic.

Comprehending the category of a migrant is useful for comprehending at the same time the category of citizen and the idea of citizenship that could include everyone's identity. In doing so, understanding citizenship would mean being familiar with contradictions (Beck 2006). Being familiar with contradictions would mean assuming the transnationalism as a new perspective through which migrations should be looked at; issues that challenge the idea of citizenship (Portes 2003) and admitting that international migrations make transnational both the society of departure and that of arrival (Bauböck 1998).

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### Which role for education?

The juridical and socio-political dimensions do not invalidate the issue of citizenship since the condition of migrants is highlighted. Citizenship is not only a juridical status, a socio-political form given by a national State: it is a 'lived experience' that involves individual and social practices.

In this direction, the unique space for education is identified: education may favour the shift from entitlement of rights, granted *ex parte principi*, to empowerment through educational practices that may enhance exercise of rights (*ex parte populi*).

Here, there is a challenge to be accepted in today's interlocked world to make socially and politically effective the idea of multiplex citizenship, which otherwise will be compelled to remain as an abstract invocation. In addition, citizenship education plays a key role in enabling people to live as multiple citizens in a globalized world.

This means rethinking the current models of citizenship education and shifting the horizon in which it is located. Unfortunately, the current educational and pedagogical debate is not very concerned about exploring the implications of these ideas of citizenship and their consequences on educational practices. On the contrary, it seems linked to a 'restricted conception' (Held 1989) of citizenship, as the Italian example perfectly shows (Tarozzi 2005).

The recent law reforming curricula of civic education aims at educating toward a common heritage and teaching future generations rules, rights, and duties for living together (the Italian notion of *convivenza civile*). Therefore, this approach is more and more far from a renovated notion of multiplex citizenship, but it is very close to an old-fashioned idea of civic education based on a strong national identity.

This is a basically conservative approach, which does not accept the challenges rooted precisely in the ambiguity of the notion of citizenship, and in its out-of-date classical meaning in the new global scenario.

There is a need to be careful. This approach recalls Habermas's position that refers to a common political culture, as a shared identity not based on ethnic-cultural roots but is political, linked to the exercise of common rights. This is a strategic vision of politics, based on negotiating interests, on seeking compromises, on the values of pluralism (Habermas 1998). But the position put forward by the Italian Government on citizenship education so far seems to be quite different: it excludes *a-priori* the possibility to deal with differences (not only ethnic-cultural one) as a resource with which it can politically rebuild the notion of citizenship.

Differences and alterity push us to experiment new ideas of citizenship, which take into account diversity, enlargement of the range of individual and group rights, of identities, and of membership.

The globalization, or better, the new global order and the reshaping of the notion of alterity, which in some respects seems to be a key-word in a postmodern world, open new paths and generate new challenges for education.

The approach to political philosophy in the current scenario with reference to its educational implications seems unavoidable. Even though education is a topic not considered as a field of political thinking by the modern liberal tradition but is relegated to the private sphere, it is central both because, in recent years it has massively enhanced reflections on differences and minority groups, and because educational experience cannot be separated from the political one (Bertolini 2003, Freire 2006).

These tasks require placing the notion of multiplex citizenship at the centre of new educational processes. But this rethinking should be done in an intercultural manner. There is need for citizenship to be based on multiple and plural identities, which is not well defined on the political and juridical level, but is definitely educable for individuals and groups.

Citizenship and plural identity have until now been conceived as a contradiction in terms. This view descends from the classical liberal perspective which, in all its forms (both of market and of rights) considers ethnic origin as pre-politic and pre-judicial. Therefore, political theory and policies cannot include the differences among individuals.

The educational dimension is central because citizenship is thought as an educative process that involves policy making process and public educational institutions. In addition, citizenship is the core part of the link between education and politics (Bertolini 2003): citizenship is a way of being and behaving that should be educated, conquered, and minded. In other words, considering citizenship as an education process means abandoning the well-established idea of citizen and welcoming multiplex citizenship that is an *a-priori* unpredictable (Lawy and Biesta 2006).

Following the above argument, modeling citizenship education that takes the moves by the idea of plural and multiple citizenship is necessary. In fact, citizenship education needs to clarify those theoretical underpinnings that influence its implementation and practice.

### **Which citizenship education?**

Looking in particular at the Italian situation, but in the light of the international debate on this theme, three educative models that represent both an evolution and a breaking point for the traditional model of civic education were found. This section briefly examines the theoretical premises (philosophical and political), the educational implications, and some critical points of each of the three models.

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The models (which for different reasons are all limited) following Walzer (1987) can be defined as:

- (1) Republican Model, in which citizenship is strictly related to belonging to a common nation-state and a shared history. The term ‘republican’ is derived from political philosophy, which defines in this way the political conception of republicanism, the conservative American concept, also known as neo-republicanism, which is proposed as an alternative to liberalism and socialism (Viroli 1999).
- (2) Liberal Model, in which the idea of citizenship is a normative function rather than a historical status. It is aimed at giving people a set of individual rights and education that should enable people to exercise them with critical thinking.
- (3) Moral Model, which points at the ethical dimension of moral education as against liberal neutrality. In doing so, it can sometimes slide into indoctrination.

### *The Republican Model*

In the republican model, which refers to the present definition of political philosophy, citizenship focuses on membership, obligation, and virtue.

Membership is linked to a country, but above all to a historical and cultural tradition, regarded as homogeneous. Citizenship reflects a strong collective identity, based on sound common roots and shared heritage.

Within the republican model, two different elements can be distinguished: on the one hand a nationalistic conservatism, which in Europe was inspired by the nationalisms of the eighteenth century; on the other hand, the new model of multiculturalism. For both, society is only an involuntary association of individuals, but community represents the warm circle in which one can find recognition and share common values on which rules must be based.

The former, conservative and traditionalist, refers not only to patriotic feelings, to the idea of homeland, of *Heimat*, but also to the ethical reference to values expressed in constitutional principles, compiled by the founding fathers of the country.

The latter locates the identity recognition not in a nation-state, but in local or in ethnic-cultural communities, which often aspires to receive territorial autonomy. In this local recognition they also establish a juridical-political recognition, based on group identities, marked by sharing common cultural roots.

In the republican model, where citizenship is membership, citizens are entitled to rights on condition that they perform the duties that civil society requires. The civic sense is built up on a shared historical and juridical heritage (knowing rules and respecting them).

In general terms, the republican approach emphasizes duties of solidarity between members of the same national society who share common cultural roots and a common fate.

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Maybe the idea of ‘Roots’ is the crucial idea of this educative model. In the roots, humans recall shared historical memory on which one can build a civic conscience, a public ethics deeply rooted in subject, and not learned extrinsically.

As a consequence, the role of education, and especially instruction in schools, is central in educating public-spirited new generations. Indeed, one can probably say that citizenship education is a basic republican political demand. For republicans, full membership of the political community requires citizenship education and developing moral bonds between members of society.

This approach is not far from the traditional civic education, despite a modernization of language and of learning contents. Citizenship education becomes a process of learning contents and skills that enable new generations to know (and thus, automatically) to enjoy rights and to perform their duties. This process is made possible through the knowledge of constitutional principles and laws of the state. This is simply civic education, legality education or education for democracy for living together.

The limits of this model are evident: firstly, its nationalistic essence, typical of European countries, and particularly of Italy, refers to an idea of the Nation-state that currently is in decline and has been largely overtaken by more complex and networked processes of governance.

On the other hand, if the model is embedded in local communities (but in Italy there are few examples of local autonomies), the risk would be social splintering and ethical and cultural relativism, which would lose sight of the important educative aims related to a global citizenship and to cosmopolitan and universal purposes.

#### *The Liberal Model*

Like ‘republican’, also the term ‘liberal’ connotes innumerable meanings. Here, contemporary liberalism, which was reshaped by John Rawls and his followers (Macedo 2000, Callan 1997, Galston 1991) in the field of education, is being referred to.

The liberal model puts the global perspective at the centre of its analysis. This model of citizenship is not related to belonging to a precise territory or to a precise ethnic group or tribe, but it is a principle of individuation that defines individuals as entitled to rights (above all liberty and equality). It is the closest view to the Marshall’s model (although Marshall’s model talks about community), but it is also close to the recent market neo-liberalism. Being citizens means having political, civil, and, maybe, social rights. In the strictest sense, this citizenship, as a foundation of modern democratic societies, assigns an individual’s portion of popular sovereignty.

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In this sense, citizenship is a principle, a normative function, not a historically given status. Therefore, citizenship education will neither aim to instill laws and values belonging to a common tradition nor to educate how to accomplish one's duty as citizen, but it should provide pupils and students with the skills needed to carry out one's role in the society, by fully exercising one's rights, and by empowering capabilities for political participation.

Among these are the capabilities to:

- analyze a situation to take a position;
- develop analytical skills and describe in an objective and neutral way;
- employ arguments to sustain own positions;
- actively value pluralism, tolerance, and autonomy.

In this sense, the notion of 'deliberative democracy' (Gutman and Thompson 1996) can be taught through this education system, the most important institution to cultivate the virtues of deliberation (Waghid 2005).

The liberal conception is strictly individualistic, because only individuals can have rights, and, in a strict sense, it does not recognize a space for education, neither in promoting an idea of good, nor in fostering social reproduction (as is the case in the republican model).

Nevertheless, it accepts some education processes, because liberal democracy requires a precise education to develop liberal virtues (Callan 1997), which is also based on the Rawls's theory of justice. For instance, according to William Galston, democracy requires citizens who can develop proper virtues needed to exercise their sovereignty's rights. One of the task of a modern democracy is to provide especially to new citizens those civic virtues and in particular the following four types (Galston 1991):

- (1) general virtues (courage, loyalty, etc.);
- (2) social virtues (independence, open-mindedness);
- (3) economic virtues (work ethic, adaptability to economical and technological change);
- (4) political virtues (discern and respect the rights of others, willingness to engage in public discourse, ability to evaluate the performance of those in office).

The liberal model, mainly in view of new global challenges and in the encounter with alterity, shows some unavoidable limits, stressed also by communitarians (Taylor 1989, 1991).

First, it is based on a limited and abstract idea of self: the self coincides with citizenship, and one loses those aspects of existence, of personality, of identity.

In fact, from this perspective, the citizen is single, atomized, deprived of networks in which he/she is always located. The individual is seen in a non-natural way, detached from contexts in which he or she usually lives and with which he or she has a meaningful relationship. In addition, it becomes an abstraction: the human with

human rights does not exist. However, this abstraction has an important political meaning, because it assigns everybody inviolable rights. But in educational terms, this is not enough.

Second, strictly related to the former, liberal model lies on a procedural (Taylor 1991), simplifying, and analytical rationality. It is the cold Kantian practical reason that leads people to be detached from concrete things and results in the lack of passion. Without it, however, it is very difficult to build active citizenry, to inspire political participation, and to guarantee the enthusiasm needed to stimulate the development of political virtue.

Apart from the need to make clear and educate for thinking and deliberation, it is also necessary to educate for orienting oneself in a relationship, in interpreting conflict, in nurturing passion, as political virtues.

Third, the liberal ethic neutrality denies the possibility of ethical judgment. Because of the attention paid to procedural and deliberative aspects, the necessity to make political concerns concrete, to state the truth, and to stimulate active concern ends up being relegated to second place.

However, when facing huge ethical issues such as the environment, globalization, human rights, and peace, education on citizenship cannot limit itself to a practice that eludes substantive visions of good.

#### *The Moral Model*

In contrast, the ethical dimension is right at the heart of the third model of citizenship education, which is defined as ‘moral’. Here, citizenship education becomes moral education. It does not stop at procedure, but suggests a set of values. These are not only civic values, as republicans sometimes refer to a shared political culture or to an idea of homeland founded on common roots, but they are moral values. In this article, in particular, the Italian situation is being referred to, where these values are metaphysically rooted and based almost exclusively on the Catholic morals.

Republican and moral models are similar in some respects, as MacIntyre (1981) stressed; an ethical doctrine is possible only within a given community and a tradition, but, in practice, they diverge because the former is inherently lay, the latter is religious and its values pretend to be universal: as is also demonstrated in the debate over the mention of the Christian roots of Europe in a typically republican document, the European Constitution.

The moral model needs to refer to comprehensive theory, which has axiological and moral roots, based on religion.

Its aim is education of values. To transmit, mainly in schools, values that the adult community considers essential for everybody. In fact, however, the adult commu-

nity does not have a shared opinion in this field. Therefore, this often means imposing the values of the majority or the more powerful group on all the others.

Education of values is important, but values are not all encompassing. Some can be maybe easily accepted, like the constitutional values or human rights; others are indubitably controversial: for example, the notion of person rather than the autonomous individual, the centrality of family and its consequences on homosexuality and sexuality orientation, religion-based opinion about modern science and its consequences on our daily life and school curriculum.

This line of argument introduces the huge question of religious schools versus state schools; however, this is not within the scope of this article (Wolf and Macedo 2004).

The limit of this approach lies in its intellectual dogmatism when the value education is framed as moral education. Referring to values is unavoidable in every educational discourse; however, the problem is their universal foundation, extrinsic from educational experience, and their closed and a-priori responses. How compatible are the needed liberal pluralism and this substantive vision centred on a common good? Without ethical pluralism, citizenship education risks to become moral training, not education toward active participation.

Following the proposed distinction between ethics and moral in the educational field by Piero Bertolini (2003), if ethics, in citizenship education, underlines the necessity to refer political acting to principles, morals define them a-priori.

The moral model offers closed and predetermined responses. Indeed, in Italian public schools, citizenship education is seldom placed side by side with moral education, as in many Anglo-Saxon countries, where moral education (not necessarily related to the Catholic moral) is included or is related to civic or citizenship education.

### **Reframing citizenship education**

All the three models briefly presented contain some important element for citizenship education. In particular, it is the authors' opinion that they suggest the key concepts of *roots*, *critical thinking*, and *ethics*. However, no single model exhausts the theme. However, in practice, each model tends to present itself as the unique or principal approach.

On the theoretical level, all these three models actually appear as incompatible, because of their different theoretical-political grounding. At the same time each one of them raises a key notion at the practical level.

Therefore, the problem becomes: what theoretical horizon allows bringing them together?

Citizenship education should permit merging the ambiguities of the socio-political notion of citizenship in a global world; in particular, the means to reconcile the

universalism of rights with the multiplicity of cultural differences (Young 1989, Fraser 1997, Barry 2001), the membership to a common heritage, where citizenship can be solidly grounded along with the universal rights, which every human being should enjoy as a global citizen.

Therefore, citizenship education according to Nussbaum is necessary to foster students' capabilities to perceive themselves as world citizens in a multicultural and diverse society (Nussbaum 2002). In addition, difference (and group rights), alterity, and identity are key notions in our world. Therefore, citizenship education is also necessary to recognize the value of the local, of the membership to a community, of living in meaningful neighborhoods.

The challenge is to transform the contradiction between citizenship and plural identity into an educational and pedagogical project, with the awareness that in a sort of 'intercultural citizenship' (Tarozzi 2003) one can find the hard mediation between the strict communitarian sense of belonging and an open-minded (theoretical and interpersonal) attitude toward other people and countries. However, this mediation needs a complex idea of citizenship that can overcome the obsolete nation-state related notion (Soysal 1994, Vitale 2004), but also one which cannot be defined from a precise political perspective. Intercultural citizenship can be lived by (and educated to) subjects acting in a community as a collective space, throughout their daily practices.

The political challenge, whose responsibility education can assume, is to educate to a planetarian era in today's interlocking world. This requires the foundation of an intercultural citizenship, based on multiple identities. This notion of citizenship is a thorn on the side of liberalism and marks the failure of communitarianism as a political project, but at the same time it can be the object of educational curriculum.

The argument is that the problems of group rights and differences within a democratic framework that political theory and practice face are enmeshed in irreconcilable impasses. Liberalism shows its limits in dealing with difference. However, the alternatives are often unacceptable and the field of education that limits itself to it reveals this quite clearly: the organic thinking of communitarian multiculturalism, in effect, gives huge value to education, but it does so in the name of an idea of a public good that is definitely illiberal.

Education offers (to some extent) a solution. The condition is that it does not become the field for the application of political theories or policies rooted in conceptions external to the educational experience *per se*, but that educational experience is conceived as a field of political action itself.

It is necessary to liberate education from its subjection to the political. Therefore, for instance, the school is not the institution to apply the educational guidelines established at the political level to accomplish political purposes (i.e. creating consensus, acquiring liberal virtues, education to obedience or to support militarism

etc.), but it becomes an autonomous domain in which to improve political behavior, overcoming that traditional divide between education and politics, imposed by liberalism.

There is the need to think of education as a political action in itself. Education is politics in two senses: from an individual point of view, the concern to develop and show the inner potential as human beings together with the capability to be in relation with others is political acting. It is one of those ‘politics of the subject’ which Alain Touraine is suggesting as a reply to the current social-political incapability to understand differences (Touraine 1998).

From a social point of view, according to Dewey’s liberal perfectionism, the social process of education, the acculturation, is political acting aimed at improving civilization, but, unlike Dewey, without an explicit commitment to the common good. In this sense, this is a political not metaphysical education, that is, by paraphrasing Rawls, without a comprehensive theory, not grounded in a definite moral philosophy.

It was Rawls who claimed the ‘educational’ role of a political theory embedded in the model of constitutional democracy (Rawls 2001), which, to sustain itself, needs citizens who not only know constitutional principles, but also who acquire a sense of justice. In addition, the state should not be totally neutral, but it should help them to perceive themselves as free and equal.

In the end, citizenship education, in the authors’ idea, is not a restyling of civic education. It cannot be locked into a precise school subject. Above all, school (either public or private) is not the only educational area where one can explore and experiment new models of citizenship education. In this sense citizenship, accepted in its rich ambiguities, is not a new label on an old bottle, but a new way to re-establish and give meaning to an active citizenship, by exploring that common area in which education and politics are constitutively interconnected.

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